

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-04 FRB-01 TRSE-00 XMB-02

OPIC-03 CIEP-01 LAB-01 SIL-01 OMB-01 FEA-01 STR-01

CEA-01 HEW-02 CU-02 /080 W
----- 041165

R 301944Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5224

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UK, PINT

SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVE PARTY: QUEEN'S SPEECH AFTERMATH

REF: LONDON 14153

SUMMARY: HEATH'S ATTACK FOR THE CONSERVATIVES ON THE
QUEEN'S SPEECH WAS NOT PARTICULARLY INSPIRED AND OBTAINED
ONLY PERFUNCTORY SUPPORT AND APPLAUSE FROM CONSERVATIVE
BACK-BENCHERS. WHILE SUPERFICIALLY THIS INDICATES A
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CONTINUING DISENCHANTMENT WITHIN THE PARTY FOR CONTINUING

HEATH LEADERSHIP, HEATH STILL HOLDS CONSIDERABLE STRENGTH AND IT IS LIKELY HE WILL CONTINUE IN THE POSITION FOR SOME TIME. END SUMMARY.

1. CONSERVATIVE LEADER HEATH LED OFF CONSERVATIVE DEBATE ON QUEEN'S SPEECH (REFTEL). ALMOST ALL MEDIA REPORTS CHOSE TO ANALYZE HEATH'S SPEECH IN TERMS OF INNER-PARTY LEADERSHIP CONTROVERSY RATHER THAN ON ITS OWN MERITS ALONE, CITING LACK OF APPLAUSE AND SUPPORT OF TORY BACK-BENCHERS AS PROOF OF WIDESPREAD DISENCHANTMENT WITH HEATH. HEATH'S PERFORMANCE COULD WELL BE CALLED AN UNINSPIRED AND SOMEWHAT LETHARGIC REPRISAL OF HIS CAMPAIGN SPEECHES; PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF SMALLNESS OF LABOR MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT, HE APPEARS TO HAVE MISSED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RALLYING OPPOSITION FORCES. THERE IS SOME POSSIBILITY, OF COURSE, THAT HEATH, CAUGHT UP IN THE POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE OF THE OCCASION, DELIBERATELY CHOSE TO CONTINUE HIS LOW-KEY POLITICAL POSTURE, RESERVING THE PYROTECHNICS FOR A LATER DATE (THE CONSERVATIVES HAD EARLIER DECIDED NOT TO DEBATE FOREIGN POLICY, DEFENSE AND PRESUMABLY IRELAND).

2. THE LEADERSHIP CONTROVERSY WAS AGAIN THE PRIMARY TOPIC OF AN INTERVIEW ON TELEVISION LAST NIGHT. UNDER RATHER AGGRESSIVE QUESTIONING, HEATH SEEMED ILL AT EASE AND DEFENSIVELY RESPONDED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER TOO HAD BEEN ACCORDED A "QUIET RECEPTION." ON LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS, HEATH INDICATED FIRMLY THAT HE WAS NOT RUNNING AWAY FROM HIS OBLIGATIONS AS LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVES, TO THE 11 MILLION WHO VOTED FOR THE PARTY UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP.

3. HEATH ALSO NOTED THAT THE LETTERS FLOODING PARTY HEADQUARTERS, IN THE GREAT MAJORITY, URGE HIM TO REMAIN -- "DON'T GIVE IN AND DON'T BE PUSHED OUT." HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT HE CONSIDERS HIMSELF SERVANT AS WELL AS LEADER OF THE PARTY AND IF THE PARTY DECIDED TO CHANGE ITS LEADER, IT WOULD BE ABLE TO DO SO.

4. COMMENT: WHILE MANY OF THE LETTERS ARE SELF-GENERATED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A NUMBER UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE RESULTED FROM THE EFFORTS OF TWO PARTY MEMBERS WHO HAVE STIMULATED SUPPORT FOR HEATH THROUGH PERSONAL APPEALS AND ADVERTISEMENTS IN NEWSPAPERS, BOTH WITHOUT ENDORSEMENT OF PARTY HEADQUARTERS. A HEADQUARTERS SOURCE, PERSONALLY CLOSE TO HEATH, SAID THAT THE PARTY, IN AN EFFORT TO MANAGE THE FLOW OF LETTERS, AVERAGING SOME TWO THOUSAND DAILY, HAD REACHED THE TWO STIMULATORS TO ASK FOR THEIR HELP IN

SOLVING THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEM THEY HAD CREATED:
HEATH REQUIRED THAT EACH LETTER BE ANSWERED AND INDIVID-
UALLY SIGNED; A BASIC FORM LETTER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS
USED WHICH IS VARIED TO MEET EACH LETTER'S CONTENTS,
AND TWO PARTY OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN FULLY OCCUPIED IN SIGN-
ING UP TO A THOUSAND LETTERS A DAY.

5. THE NEXT STAGE IN THE CONTROVERSY WILL BE THE CON-
VENING OF THE NEW 1922 COMMITTEE. OTHER HEADQUARTERS
SOURCES EXPLAINED THE COMMITTEE AS THE CONSERVATIVE
PARTY'S EQUIVALENT TO THE PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY;
IT INCLUDES ALL CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
EXCEPT THE WHIPS AND, WHEN THE PARTY IS IN POWER, THE

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CABINET. THIS ORGANIZATION WILL NOW BE CONVENED AND ELECT ITS OWN OFFICERS: A CHAIRMAN (EITHER DU CANN AGAIN OR SOMEONE ELSE) SEVERAL DEPUTIES, AND A SECRETARY. IT WILL NEXT PROCEED TO CONSIDER OPPOSITION POLICIES AND PROBABLY INVITE HEATH TO PARTICIPATE. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE COMMITTEE COULD TAKE A VOTE, IN EFFECT, ON A NO-CONFIDENCE-IN-HEATH MOTION; THIS WOULD BE A GROUND-BREAKING STEP AND, ACCORDING TO SOME PARTY SOURCES, IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOT TOO LIKELY.

6. THE SAME RESULT COULD POSSIBLY BE OBTAINED BY A "SENSE OF THE MEETING" ACTION WHICH COULD BE REPORTED BY THE COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE TO HEATH. THIS, IF ADEQUATELY PERSUASIVE, WOULD ENCOURAGE HEATH TO RESIGN AS LEADER AND THE COMMITTEE WOULD THEN HOLD AN ELECTION. HEATH COULD, OF COURSE, CHOOSE TO STAND DOWN AND RUN FOR RE-ELECTION; HE WOULD LIKELY CHOOSE TO DO THIS ONLY IN THE EVENT HE WAS CONVINCED OF AN OVER-WHELMING VOTE OF CONFIDENCE.

7. ALL OF THIS SEEMS TO INDICATE HEATH WILL NOT VOLUNTARILY STEP DOWN AND THAT THE CONSERVATIVE PARLIAMENTARIANS WILL NOT FORCE THE PACE. HEATH HAS THE LETTERS TO SHOW GRASS-ROOT SUPPORT IN THE PARTY. IN ADDITION, HIS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED SHADOW CABINET CHANGES (LORD CARRINGTON AS TORY SPOKESMAN IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS TO REPLACE LORD WINDELSHAM WHO IS OFF TO EARN MONEY IN TELEVISION, WILLIE WHITELAW AS SHADOW SPOKESMAN ON DEVOLUTION, AND A HEATH CRITIC, JOHN PEYTON, AS SHADOW LEADER IN COMMONS) REPRESENT SOME STRENGTHENING OF HIS POSITION.

8. WHAT HELPS HEATH TOO IS THE ABSENCE OF A VIABLE RIVAL. WHITELAW HAS DISQUALIFIED HIMSELF ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS BY HIS FULSOME EXPRESSIONS OF LOYALTY TO HEATH. DU CANN LOST CREDIBILITY BY HIS FURTIVENESS IN CALLING LAME-DUCK SESSIONS OF THE OLD COMMITTEE. SIR KEITH JOSEPH HURT HIS OWN PROSPECTS WITH THE BIRMINGHAM SPEECH, ALTHOUGH HE HAS MADE SOME RECOVERY FROM THE INITIAL SHOCKS.

9. THUS, THE CONSERVATIVES ARE IN A SENSE STILL STUCK

WITH HEATH AND THE LONGER THIS CONTINUES, THE MORE
DIFFICULT BECOMES ANY KIND OF SMOOTH TRANSITION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPEECHES, TELEVISION BROADCASTING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 OCT 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LONDON14154
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740310-0118
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974107/aaaaafoytel
Line Count: 227
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: LONDON 14153
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 APR 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <07-Aug-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONSERVATIVE PARTY: QUEEN'S SPEECH AFTERMATH
TAGS: PINT, UK, CONSERVATIVE PARTY, (HEATH, HAROLD), (ELIZABETH II)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005